

REVIEWS

The Ferns of Tasmania: Their Ecology and Distribution, by Michael Garrett. 1996. Tasmanian Forest Research Council, Inc., GPO Box 207B, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia. ISBN 0-7246-3519-X. A\$50.00 (+ packing and postage at A\$25 copy to Europe, Africa, and the Americas, A\$20 elsewhere outside Australia). ix, 217 pp., paperbound.

Tasmania, an island about 150 miles long and wide, lies below eastern Australia at a latitude of about 41–43°S, parallel with the northern half of the South Island of New Zealand and about the same distance from the equator as Boston or northern Spain. The climate is temperate maritime, with mild winters and cool summers. About half the island is forested, and lakes are abundant. The low, mountainous terrain produces differences in rainfall and a variety of soils, which assure a wide variety of habitats for pteridophytes. Moist forests harbor about half the 101 pteridophyte species known for the island, with dry forests and alpine areas having most of the others.

The general information that begins the book includes material on fern structure and life cycle, propagation and cultivation, a checklist, and ecology, distribution, and conservation status of the pteridophytes. Details are given in three appendices. The species are listed alphabetically, one to a page, with scientific and common names, notes (especially regarding habitats), and a distribution map of 10 km² grid squares. Sight records are distinguished from occurrences based on herbarium vouchers. There are no descriptions. Each species has a separate color habit photograph or medium close-up that is sharp and quite diagnostic. Scattered among the habit photographs are depictions of the various habitats. A glossary, field keys to the genera and species, references, and an index conclude the volume. As a herbarium taxonomist, I found the field keys particularly interesting, for they often mention characters that one can appreciate best in the field, such as texture, frond habit, habitat, intra-Tasmanian distribution, and abundance.

As its title implies, this volume is more broadly focused than most pteridophyte Floras. It will be as valuable to ecologists and horticulturists as it is to botanists. The book is well produced and will fit easily in a backpack, although it is quite heavy. A hard cover edition is also available at A\$75.00. The U.S. dollar price is currently about ¾ of the Australian dollar price. The habitat photographs and the field keys make one want to have a first-hand look at the terrain and its pteridophytes. But watch out for the “mean nakes.” Tasmania is reported to have something like seven of the ten most poisonous serpent species in the world.—DAVID B. LELLINGER, U. S. National Herbarium MRC-166, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560.